

Key debating terms

To define the moot: To say what the team line is on the moot. This is the task of the First Speaker of the Affirmative Team, and it involves identifying the dictionary definition of the key terms, or clarifying the common-sense meaning of the keywords as they will be used in the team's case.

Argument: An idea, based on fact or opinion, which is used by debating speakers to support, attack, or defend the team's point of view on the moot. Arguments are most effective, of course, if they are backed up with some evidence.

Rebuttal: The technical term "rebuttal" is used to describe the rejection of what has been said by the previous speaker. This forms an important part of the team's case in arguing against their opponents. All speakers, except the First Affirmative Speaker (who defines the moot), begin their speeches by seeking to rebut points made by the speaker before them.

Leader's Reply: When all three speakers have presented their arguments on the moot, the Team Leader on each side is given the right to make a final submission. It is the last chance to summarise the team's line of argument on the moot, and to make any final rebuttal of the opposing team's arguments. The Negative Leader replies first, the Affirmative Leader concludes the debate.

Speaking Time: Speaking times are decided before the debate. The times set for each speaker are usually between 4 and 10 minutes, depending on the level of the debating competition. Times for School and impromptu debates may be set between 3 and 5 minutes per speaker. It is usual for the Leader's Reply speech (Affirmative and Negative) to be set at half the ordinary Speaking Time.

Point of Order: A Point of Order is the name given to an interruption by a team member to point out that the opposing team has broken the "rules of debate". The Chair must then decide to **uphold** or **reject** the Point of Order. Making decisions like this is difficult for the Chair and many school debates do not therefore allow Points of Order. They tend to slow down and fragment the debate for the audience.

Peroration: This is the technical word for the summing up of a speaker's arguments in a debate. It should be a brief and clear restatement of the points made in the body of the speech.
